

Maine State House
State and Capitol Streets
Augusta
Kennebec
Maine

HABS No. ME-130

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ME,
6-AUG,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

APPENDIX
PLATE 13

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MAINE STATE HOUSE

HABS No. ME-130

Location: State and Capitol Streets, Augusta, Kennebec County, Maine.
Present Owner: State of Maine.
Present Use: State government offices, meeting rooms, etc.
Significance: The Maine State House, designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1829.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1829-1832.
2. Architect: Charles Bulfinch. The only documented work of Bulfinch from his last 14 years.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Weston Hill, the site of the Capitol, was bought from Judy Weston by the citizens of Augusta, in 1823. It was accepted as the site of the State Capitol in 1827.
4. Builders and suppliers, etc.: Bulfinch drew up the plans; the construction of the building was supervised by William King, who was at that time Commissioner of State Buildings. King supervised the construction of the walls, arcade, colonnade, pediment and the base of the dome. Completion of the building was achieved under the direction of Revel Williams.
5. Original plan and construction: The building was to be 150' x 50' but in fact is 146' long with a portico 80' x 15'. The central portion consists of an arcade supporting a colonnaded portico of eight Doric granite columns crowned with a pediment. "The Doric colonnade of the portico was recalled in the rear facade by pilasters of the same order and a crowning eave pediment. These decorative features adorned a slightly projecting central pavilion." A dome and lantern cupola surmounted the central section. (Maine's Capitol, WPA, 1939). The interiors of the building were of wooden construction, except for the floor of the Rotunda and of the Department of State. (1911 Report of Commission on Enlarging the State House). It was of grey Hallowell granite, and had a leaky roof and faulty heating system which caused fires in it more than once.

William King was asked by the Commission on the State House to look at other state capitols for ideas and models for the Maine State Capitol. (Letters in Maine Historical Society to William King, re the State House). By February 1829 the council adopted

a resolution "stating the dimensions, referring to it as a work of Bulfinch, and 'as representing the Boston State House reduced to the dimensions aforesaid.'" (Bulfinch, ed. by Bulfinch, p. 275).

Bulfinch himself is quoted as writing "This plan was designed with a platform over the East colonnade and an attic story and cupola. Upon revising the plan, I take the liberty to suggest that it would be more comfortable to the simplicity of good models of Antique buildings, to crown the Colonnade with a pediment, and to terminate the building with a Dome about 14 ft. elevation, and a cupola as first proposed." (June 1830)

An unsigned and undated document from the committee on the building (in Maine Historical Society, Letters to Gov. King re the State House) mentions that the second story was reduced from 30' to 28.' On June 22, 1829 the committee authorized King to make the 2nd story 24 ft. "instead of 26 ft., as noted in the plan of W. (sic) Bulfinch adopted by the Governor....provided the said commissioner, shall, on advising with W. Bulfinch, consider same expedient." (Maine Historical Society).

In the Maine State Library at Augusta is a bound volume of plans and copies of plans by Bulfinch and others for the original building. (For photocopies of these plans see photographs ME-130-8 through ME-130-32.) On page 1 Edward Russell, Secretary of State attested April 15, 1829, that the plans "marked A, B, C. D, E. F, and G are true copies of plans made by C. Bulfinch and adopted February 3, 1829." The plans marked "A" comprise two pages of floor plans of the lower story and principal story. The first page contains an open hall, arcade on the east, treasury and office on the north, office of the Secretary of State and an office on the south. The second page contains the House of Representatives in the center, forming a semicircle open on the east, colonnade on the east, Senate chamber on north facing the center of the building, and governor and council on the south. There were stair wells at both sides, of the central spaces. "D" is a plan of the foundation. "E" contains details of the foundations of four elevations. "F" is a plan of the grounds laid out in three concentric oval terraces around the building. Three flights of steps approach the east: a curved drive intersecting the ovals, and one flight of steps approach the west. Outside the grounds were a ring of trees and an oval drive. The inner terrace was 230' long and 180' wide, the next 400' x 336', the third 600' x 460', and the roadway outside, 700' x 560'. Two 20' wide embankments separated the terraces. "G" contains details of cast iron railing which other plans show was to have been used at the base of the attic story of the rejected plan.

The information on pages 9-80 are summarized below:

Page 9: is alternative landscaping.

12-14: elevations for rejected facades, with platform, attic story, and cupola, and pediments on the ends rather than sides.

15: the east facade as built, but minus the dome.

16: cross-section of rejected plan.

17: foundation and elevation of dome.

18: east elevation as built.

19: same as 2.

20: alternative floor plans with a grand divided curved stair in center space: the main story had the House of Representatives and ante-rooms on the south, Senate on northeast, Secretary of State and Treasury on northwest. The second story had the Governor's office and council on the east opposite the stairs, and 12 rooms off a north-south corridor.

21-22: plans like those adopted.

23: interior of Senate.

24-26: plans for Senate floor, oval, single crescent, and double crescent, with last marked in detail and labeled "accepted."

28-33: plans and walls of House of Representatives which seated members in 6 sections divided by 5 parallel aisles, in 9 to 11 slightly curved rows per section. There were large fireplaces projecting from each corner of the room.

35 & 36: are walls of the House of Representatives and the Council Chamber, both accepted.

27-45: relate to the rejected plan, as do 47 and 49.

46 & 48: are details of the arcade as built.

50-52: are pediment details of the west front.

53: the attic story.

54: dome framing.

55: east front wings.

56-57" ends.

58-80: details of paneling, stone work, fencing, cornices, and moldings.

6. Alterations and additions: In 1852 rooms were finished in the north and south wings of the basement. In 1860 six committee rooms were added. In 1891 the three-story wing on the back (west) was completed, Brigham and Spofford, architects, and in 1909-10 the State House was rebuilt, retaining only Bulfinch's front and back facades and rotunda. The length was increased to 300 ft. and a 185 ft. dome was added. This was done under the supervision of Charles S. Hichborn of Augusta after designs by G. Henri Desmond of Boston. The George A. Fuller Company of Boston was given the contract for the entire work. Notes on the new dimensions uses of rooms, materials, statue, and cost may be found in the Maine Historical Society, State House, Report of Commission on Enlargement, 1911.

A 12' copper-gilt statue of Augusta by W. Clark Noble of Augusta was added to the top of the new dome. The city is represented as a female figure crowned with pine boughs, holding a pine cone in the left hand, and a raised pine torch in the right.

The Maine State Library has plans for the 1889 addition, by Brigham and Spofford; for 1901 and 1903 alterations by John Calvin Stevens of Portland, Maine; for the 1909 rebuilding by G. Henri Desmond; for 1924 changes in the library to double stacks, a vault in the basement, by Art Metal Construction Company, and Desmond and Lord; and for the Capitol grounds in 1930.

Prepared by: Eleni Silverman
Architectural Historian, HABS
June 1984 from a field report by
Martha Kingsbury
HABS Maine III
1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural charater: This structure, extensively remodeled in 1911, is typical of late 19th century and early 20th century legislative buildings throughout the United States. The porch, veranda and central portion of the east elevation fully exploit the Hallowell granite of which the building is constructed.
2. Condition of the fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This structure is a large four story granite building; rectangular center section with hyphens and wings to the north and south. A wing projects west from the central unit to a round bay terminal. A metal dome and its two drums are over the center section. Overall dimensions are approximately 163' x 319'.
2. Foundations: Foundations are granite ashlar walls, some 3'-0" thick, on hardpan and gravel.
3. Wall construction: Bearing walls of grey Hallowell granite in ashlar patterns; rustication in porch piers and arches at first floor east elevation; pilasters in House and Senate wings at third and fourth floors: belt courses mark floor levels.
4. Structural system: Wall bearing construction, post and beam system and masonry vaults between steel beams in north and south wings.

5. Porches, etc.: The principal entrance is through a porch at east (front) elevation, second floor level, veranda at third floor above porch. The veranda is defined by monolithic granite columns and wrought iron railing. A porch entrance at north side of west wing, second floor level, has granite steps, wrought iron railing and bracketed hood. Portico in north and in south elevations of wings at first floor level.
6. Chimneys: Granite chimneys, tapered caps with flat sheet metal hoods.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Arched doorways in exterior masonry walls, two doors per opening. Doors of no importance.
 - b. Windows: Rectangular openings at all levels except at the third floor where arched openings occur. Window sashes are DH. 12/12, 8/8, 4/4 and 18/12. Casements at fourth floor in north and south wings.
8. Roof: Flat and gable roof with membrane covering:
 - a. Cornice is a flat molded granite cornice, simple entablature.
 - b. Domes: There are three domes on the structure; one at the central block, one over both the House and Senate wings. The central dome has an outer copper covering. The columns of the lower drum and pilasters and of the second drum are painted and textured to represent granite. The lantern is open with columns. A gilded female figure forms the final of the dome. The domes over the House and Senate wings are flat over monitor lights, and have flag staff finials.

C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan by floor:
 - a. First or ground floor consists of a museum and offices with tunnel to west and State Office Building.
 - b. Second floor, entered from porch, consists of "Hall of Flags," State Library, Secretary of State offices and hearing rooms.
 - c. Third floor: The third floor has a central hall open to rotunda and dome, the chambers of the House of Representatives and Senate, the Governor's offices and executive council and hearing rooms.

- d. Fourth floor: The fourth floor contains the upper parts of Chambers, offices and rotunda, with access to spaces between the inner and outer domes and roof.
- 2. Stairways: There are three major stairways. The stairway in the west wing appears to be c. 1900. It has marble treads and risers, a wrought iron railing, iron newels and wood hand rail. Two minor stairs at each side of rotunda have "U" shaped cantilever and bracket, marble tread, metal risers, metal railing with wood hand rail.
- 3. Flooring: Ceramic and marble tile. Ceramic tile is hand laid in the second floor central hall.

The marble tile is black and white, with black trim and white tiles at the diagonal. There is a variety of plastic floor tiles and carpeting.

- 4. Wall and ceiling finish:
 - a. Walls are plaster, some with plaster chair rails and marble base trim.
 - b. Ceiling: Plaster, coffered ceilings in the House and Senate chambers with dentil and bracket cornices. Skylights in some spaces are closed over.
- 5. Decorative features and trim:
 - a. Paired pilasters and dentiled cornice in the rotunda. The House chamber has sculptured brackets under the balcony.
 - b. There are bronze cases housing flag displays.
- 6. Notable hardware: None of importance.
- 7. Lighting fixtures: Bracket electric fixtures with three globes each; exposed bulbs in coffered House chamber.
- 8. Heating: Modern steam heat whose source is a separate boiler room in the State Office Building.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting: The State House is located on a hill east of the State Office Building. It faces south on a mall defined by trees.

2. Landscaping: The State House is surrounded by a masonry and stone fence. Planting is perimetric with granite and concrete walls.

Prepared by: F. Blair Reeves, AIA
HABS Maine Coast 1965
Edited for transmittal to the Library
of Congress by Eleni Silverman
Architectural Historian, HABS
June 1984

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Old Views:

The Maine Historical Society has a reproduction of an engraving dating from 1850, showing the State House from the front, with landscaping, terraces, gates and fences, and a photograph pre dating 1908, from a low viewpoint which shows the facade well but little of the dome; also 1937-8 WPA photos of the present state capitol.

A photo in Views of Augusta (Maine Historical Society, n.d., pre 1908 shows the dome but trees obscure the wings. C. Place's book, Charles Bulfinch, reproduces a pencil drawing of the old building, about 1908.

The Capitol is has a large perspective of the building done about 1914, probably from the Desmond office.

A clipping in the Maine Historical Society from the Lewiston Journal May 16, 1923, contains a photograph of the statue now atop the dome.

B. Sources:

E. S. Bulfinch, ed., Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1896, p. 275 ff.

Charles A. Place, Charles Bulfinch, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1925, p. 270-72.

Augusta-Hallowell on the Kennebec, Writers Project of WPA, Kennebec Journal Print Shop, 1940.

Maine's Capitol, Writers Project of WPA, Kennebec Journal Print Shop, Augusta, Maine, 1939.

Report of Commission on Enlargement of State House, 1911. Maine Historical Society.

Gov. William King: Letters re the State House in Maine Historical Society.

Maine Historical Society, photo files and clipping files.

Maine State Library, photo files, clipping files and portfolio of plans ca. 1829.

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Data pages 1 through 8 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 9.

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LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-101L*	EAST FRONT FROM DISTANCE
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-101R*	EAST FRONT FROM DISTANCE
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-102L*	EAST FRONT FROM STREET -- LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-102R*	EAST FRONT FROM STREET -- LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-103L*	EAST FRONT FROM STREET--INCLINED TO CUPOLA
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-103R	EAST FRONT FROM STREET--INCLINED TO CUPOLA
	Left and right overlap: 90%

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Data (Page 10)

LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-104L*	EAST FRONT FROM SE--ANGLE VIEW
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-104R	EAST FRONT FROM SE--ANGLE VIEW
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-105L*	ANGLE VIEW OF EAST FRONT FROM SE--SLIGHTLY TILTED
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-105R	ANGLE VIEW OF EAST FRONT FROM SE--SLIGHTLY TILTED
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-106L*	SOUTH SIDE ELEVATION
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-106R	SOUTH SIDE ELEVATION
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-107L*	SOUTH SIDE OF REAR WING
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-107R	SOUTH SIDE OF REAR WING
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-108L*	REAR (WEST) ELEVATION--FROM GROUND LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-108R	REAR (WEST) ELEVATION --FROM GROUND LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-109L*	REAR (WEST) ELEVATION, FROM ROOFTOP--LOOKING DOWNWARD
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-109R	REAR (WEST) ELEVATION, FROM ROOFTOP--LOOKING DOWNWARD
	Left and right overlap: 85%

LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-110L*	REAR (WEST) ELEVATION, FROM ROOFTOP--LOOKING UPWARD
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-110R	REAR (WEST) ELEVATION, FROM ROOFTOP--LOOKING UPWARD
	Left and right overlap: 85%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-111L*	NORTH SIDE ELEVATION--LEVEL
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-111R	NORTH SIDE ELEVATION--LEVEL
	Left and right overlap: 90%
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-112L*	NORTH SIDE ELEVATION--INCLINED
LC-HABS-GS05-T-1736-112R	NORTH SIDE ELEVATION--INCLINED
	Left and right overlap: 85%

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

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